Part 121-2: WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE IN TWENTY YEARS?

2-1 The Vision

Rhode Island of 2025 will be a unique and special place, influenced by its proximity to the Boston metropolitan area, but separate from it. The state's landscape will retain its distinctive character. Its history, tradition, and compelling natural beauty will prevail as its hallmarks. Land use patterns and development design will distinguish its diverse communities and celebrate the authenticity of its special places.

Having contained sprawl, the state's urban form will be a pattern of concentrations. People and their endeavors will continue to be largely concentrated in traditional locations. Dense centers of varying scales, both traditional and new, will be the foci of housing, commerce, and social interaction.

Greater Providence – at the head of the Bay – will be the region's premier center, a vital and self-renewing core for people and culture. Other cities, town centers, and villages will be centers for the state's major sub-regions or individual communities. Networks of efficient transport and services will connect and support the major centers. New, planned centers will emulate the essence of traditional communities at locations newly advantaged by regional transport hubs. All centers will exemplify quality design, and embody vibrancy, livability, and sustainability.

Rhode island in 2025 will also be green and blue. A thinly settled, predominantly forested band in the western third of the state will conserve essential resources and support resource based economies. These Borderlands, with adjoining conserved areas in eastern Connecticut provide a distinctive 'break' in the otherwise developed Boston to Washington northeast corridor. Conserved farmland and forests will surround centers, with the built environment infused by greenways and greenspace. The state's centerpiece, the Bay, will be healthy and productive. Where land meets water, the waterfront edge will remain the state's trademark, carefully managed to provide utility and activity, while preserving the beauty of its natural features.

In 2025, Rhode Island will be a place that strikes the proper balance between the needs of its people and the protection of its unique environmental resources. It will be a place where present and future generations may enjoy the benefits of the state's natural beauty, engage the world through a productive economy, and retain a connection to their past while embracing a prosperous future.

.

Gauging Public Perceptions of Land Use Objectives

Much of *Land Use 2025* flows from the opinions of the general public, state leadership, and planning professionals on land use trends, community values, and growth priorities. Going back as far as 2000, gathering this information included several major efforts: a public opinion survey, a televised "Town Meeting," and a series of regional meetings with local planning officials. In 2003, interviews were conducted with several dozen Rhode Island planning practitioners and they were brought together for a

day-long brainstorming session that produced the organizing framework for this plan: greenways, community design, and infrastructure. Findings from each of these efforts can be found in the Technical Appendices.

Deriving a Land Use Vision for Rhode Island

This plan begins with the premise that certain commonly held beliefs underlie public policy in land use. We assume that, while they may differ in how they express them, Rhode Islanders to a great degree share the following opinions:

- Rhode Island's land and water are finite resources that must be efficiently employed to support strong communities built upon the state's social, economic, and environmental diversity.

- We must maintain and enhance our high quality of life, and sustain a successful economy that provides opportunities for all.

- No single purpose, sector, or entity can shape a successful land use future alone. It must be created by an alliance of governments, business, and the public working in concert toward shared goals.

Beyond these basic concepts, land use professionals have developed detailed technical and strategic policies that are also fundamental to *Land Use 2025.* These would shape future land use in Rhode Island to achieve vibrant community centers and neighborhoods, a pervasive greenspace network, revitalized urban centers, the containment of sprawl, quality design in development, and effective stewardship of all resources.

Several state documents have articulated visions for land use in Rhode Island, extolled the values of certain resources, or offered descriptions of what we would like the state to be. For example, State Guide Plan Element 155, *A Greener Path: Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future* established a greenspace vision in 1994. This system of greenspace was also described in State Guide Plan 152, *Ocean State Outdoors: Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* in 2003:

> A statewide system of connecting greenspaces and greenways, a network made up of critical natural and cultural resources, outdoor recreation facilities, public space, community and urban forests, public and private open spaces.
>
> The greenspace system is to be Rhode Island's permanent green framework within which the state's communities will design and build in the 21st century. ((30:4.2))

Concentrating land uses in well-designed community centers is a tenet of good planning and a basic recommendation of both the 1975 and 1989 State Land Use Plans. More recently, the Governor's Growth Planning Council launched an initiative to promote *growth centers* by recommending the adoption of a state investment strategy that would act as an incentive. This investment strategy would prioritize state discretionary investments (to include state managed federal funds) as well as technical assistance

and expedited regulatory review to locally designated and state approved centers. Growth centers are defined as having "a core of commercial and community services, residential development, and natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place," making them dynamic and efficient centers for development. ((7:2))

The importance of "the power of place" – the relationship between quality of place and quality of life – and the importance of successful land use strategies to preserve them are increasingly recognized as strategic tools for economic well-being. The R.I. Economic Policy Council and others have extolled the potential of the state's "rich mix of authentic places" to attract or retain the young and the talented, people who can contribute much to the economy if they settle here. ((21:1))

An "Urban/Rural" Systems Approach

When examined on the *broadest* scale, for example from a map of the state, a striking characteristic of Rhode Island's land use pattern is that it retains a strong distinction between the historic urban centers and more rural surrounding areas. Today, in 2005, one can leave downtown Providence and be 'in the country' in twenty minutes. This is a tremendous asset that is increasingly rare in thriving metropolitan areas. Settlement around waterfront and manufacturing centers remains the dominant feature of the state's landscape, despite the decline in manufacturing and the disinvestments in urban areas. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Part 1, this urban/rural distinction will be in jeopardy if we continue to develop in accord with current trends.

It has been suggested that these two distinctly different development patterns call for the state to pursue two significantly different but compatible land use strategies. This may be thought of as an "urban/rural" approach, and can be summed up as follows:

"Urban" approach: In the urban residential corridor, we need a strategy that recognizes and supports a more intensive land use. Land use policies should focus on initiatives for preserving or enhancing neighborhoods, traditional villages and communities, and promoting mass transit, pedestrian environments, affordable housing, compact development, public infrastructure, and urban design.

"Rural" approach: In the more rural areas of the state, and along the forested corridors, south shore beaches, salt ponds, and the Bay islands, we need a strategy that acknowledges and accommodates a level of residential and recreational land use consistent with preserving the natural resources and retaining the open space character of these areas. We should avoid sprawl and advocate clustering development, natural resource protection, fragile area overlays, on-site septic systems and wells, and greenway connections.

Rhode Island land use patterns are complex and diverse even within these two general urban/rural density patterns. We want to preserve and encourage this complexity within Rhode Island's landscape because they form what the Economic Policy Council calls our "authentic places." We also want to preserve and encourage the distinction between the mostly urban and mostly rural parts of Rhode Island.

We can use a *land use systems approach* to improve the overall land use pattern and its individual components:

- The network of *greenspace* can be used to shape the built centers.
- The *built centers* can maximize the good building sites by having well designed, compact, dense construction.
- The *infrastructure* systems provide the basic skeleton – the support and connections, the roads and the public utilities that make the concentrated community centers possible.

A Constellation of Centers

Rhode Island is often described as a city-state, with Providence and the surrounding communities at the head of the Bay as its large, central core. This notion poses Greater Providence as the major center for the state, the core of a "Rhode Island region" that also encompasses parts of southeastern Massachusetts, and to a lesser extent eastern Connecticut.

It may be more useful to imagine Rhode Island as a constellation of community centers. ((1:6)) This construct would recognize the dominance of Greater Providence as a traditional center, embrace smaller regional centers, and allow for the emergence of new centers.

The constellation image thus captures the statewide network of centers of various sizes – state, regional, city, town, and village. The centers are connected by infrastructure corridors framed by an extensive greenspace network, including all municipalities at one level and the small and large centers at another. The constellation approach accounts for greenspace, special places, growth centers, and transportation corridors, all essential elements in land use planning and the future land use vision.

2-2 Goals

There are several overarching goals to meet in order to realize the *Land Use 2025* vision articulated on page 2-1. The first describes the mission, the reason we plan; the next cover the three components of land use – greenspace, community design, and infrastructure; and the last addresses implementation and maintenance. These goals are:

1. *A sustainable Rhode Island that is beautiful, diverse, connected, and compact.* with a distinct quality of place in our urban and rural centers, an abundance of natural resources and a vibrant sustainable economy.

2. *A greenspace and greenways network.* A statewide network of greenspaces and greenways that protects and preserves the environment, wildlife habitats, natural resources, scenic landscapes, provides recreation, and shapes urban growth.

3. *Excellence in community design.* Communities that are high quality, energy- and water-efficient, safe healthful, distinct, diverse and aesthetically pleasing: communities that are rich in natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources: communities that provide abundant economic activities.

4. *First class supporting infrastructure.* that protects the public's health, safety and welfare, fosters economic well-being, preserves and enhances environmental quality, and reinforces the distinction between urban and rural areas.

To accomplish this, Rhode Islanders must *implement and maintain the vision.* This includes continuing to support public stewardship for land use through strategic public investments in growth centers, land conservation, development, and enhanced planning capacity at the local and regional levels.

2-3 Policies

The policies outlined here are intended to guide public investment toward fulfillment of their respective goals. As in other elements of the State Guide Plan, these policies provide a foundation for action that encompasses related social, physical, and environmental factors to be considered in making those investments.

1. *A sustainable Rhode Island that is beautiful, diverse, connected, and compact.*

- Link land use planning with water use planning to encourage new growth in appropriate locations that preserves a clean and adequate water supply.
- Control sprawl and the urban exodus of business and industry.
- Use open space to control and shape urban growth.
- Achieve a livable, coherent, and visually pleasing environment.
- Relate the use of land to its natural characteristics, varying suitability and capacity for development.
- Relate the use of land to the level of public facilities and services available, or planned to be available.
- Promote the establishment of higher residential densities and smaller lot frontages in urban and suburban areas, and town centers, where public water and sewer service is present or planned. In areas that lack supporting infrastructure, promote conservation development and identification of appropriate sites for village centers that will provide compact mixed-use areas for locating services, commercial space, housing, and public transportation hubs.
- Promote low overall densities where public services are unavailable and are not planned. Promote conservation development in areas that lack supporting infrastructure.

- Recognize Narragansett Bay and watersheds as assets that contribute significantly to the state's beauty and connectivity. Promote holistic systems planning approaches at the watershed level.

- Guide development in a manner that will prevent encroachment on floodways, dunes, barrier beaches, coastal and freshwater wetlands, and other natural features that provide protection from storms, flooding, and sea-level rise.

- Facilitate public stewardship of healthy and vibrant watersheds that sustain life and support current and future uses.

2. *A greenspace and greenways network.*

   - Encourage development patterns that protect water for drinking, ecosystems, and other critical purposes, as well as other natural resources.

   - Factor into decisions regarding development the importance of recreation, open space, historic resources, and public access to the shore to the state's economy, in tourism, and in maintaining our quality of life.

   - Design open space systems and corridors to protect complete ecologic units and provide structure and character to the built environment. Maintain the openness of our western borderlands and recognize the significance of this system within the Northeast Corridor.

   - Protect and enhance those values of the coastal region, including scenic values, that contribute to the state's quality of life. Examine proposals for changes in the coastal region in terms of their importance to the state as a whole.

   - Create an interconnecting network of bike paths, trails and walkways to expand walking and bicycle travel options.

   - Preserve and enhance wildlife, fish, and plant species diversity and stability through habitat protection, restoration, enhancement, and prevention or mitigation of adverse impacts due to human activities.

   - Protect rare and unique geologic or other natural features.

   - Preserve the best farmland and active farms in the state for active agricultural use.

3. *Excellence in community design.*

   - Develop residential, commercial, and mixed-use areas that are compactly grouped, attractive, and compatible with the ability of land and water

resources and level of public facilities and services available to support development.

- Develop and promote innovative and sustainable land development techniques and apply available technology to make decent housing affordable for low- and moderate-income households.

- Provide a variety of housing options in proximity to major employment generators to meet the needs of the labor force.

- Preserve and enhance the distinctiveness of urban, suburban, village, and rural communities and landscapes.

- Preserve historic buildings, districts, and archeological sites.

- Relate the location of residential developments and neighborhoods to employment and commercial centers, community facilities and services, and mass transit corridors.

- Relate industrial and commercial development to overall land use by promoting the use of development controls and performance standards that mitigate conflicts with other land uses and activities.

- Stimulate the expansion of economic development activities, including cultural, educational, and research centers, in the central business districts of Rhode Island's municipalities.

4. *First class supporting infrastructure.*

- Protect and provide utility services that are adequate to meet the needs of present and future populations.

- Conserve and enhance desirable existing industrial areas, regional shopping areas, office complexes, and concentrations of service activities to maximize the investment and utilization of existing infrastructure.

- Locate public water and sewer facilities so as to shape development in accordance with state land use policies, rather than simply to accommodate growth.

- Plan new or expanded public sewer and water services, highway improvements, and mass transit service, for industrial and commercial development where such development is appropriate in terms of natural constraints of the land, air, and water, and where the area is being developed at an intensity that is consistent with state land use policy and will not promote wasteful use of resources.

- Locate development causing other than domestic waste discharges in areas served or planned for service by public sewer systems, or where

appropriate waste treatment and disposal can be provided and maintained in an effective, environmentally-sound manner.

- Encourage development that applies best management practices for water and stormwater management.

- Promote state and local development programs and activities that encourage new growth in locations and at densities that will achieve appropriate utilization of existing water supply sources.

- Develop and maintain a balanced, integrated, safe, secure**,** and cost-efficient transportation system, locating residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional development within transportation corridors. Relate the design and location of transportation facilities positively to the natural and cultural landscape.

- Provide a high aesthetic quality in the transportation system.

- Link transportation and land use planning and apply appropriate land use controls and design standards in transportation corridors and interchange areas in order to maintain the functional integrity of existing and planned roadways alleviate congestion, promote safety, and reduce the need for new highways.

- Promote concentrations of high-density housing and employment near existing and planned commuter rail stations and other mass transit routes and terminals.

- Require the integration of appropriate transit, pedestrian, bicycle and other modal choices in new development to lessen dependence on the automobile where feasible.

- Develop land in the immediate vicinity of airports in a manner that will be compatible with airport operations. Seek to minimize adverse impacts, if any, to pre-existing land uses.

- Encourage development patterns that promote energy efficiency and help attain state air quality objectives.

- Promote land use development that contributes to energy conservation and increased reliance on renewable energy resources, while assuring dependable sources of fuel supplies to meet long-term energy needs.

- Recognize the varying demands for energy associated with different land use patterns, and encourage patterns that tend to reduce the need for energy.

We can do the following to implement and maintain the vision:

- Promote the designation of growth centers at appropriate locations and of appropriate design to achieve a concentrated development pattern in accordance with the vision of *Land Use 2025.* Implement a state investment strategy that recognizes growth centers as a priority.

- Support property tax reform efforts that will reduce the negative influences of the current system on land use decision-making.

- Continue implementation and enhancement of the State Guide Plan / Community Comprehensive Plan system as a coordinated and consistent framework for attaining state and local goals for land use and development.

- Maintain and enhance the capacities of state, regional, and local land use planning and management functions in support of the land use vision and goals of *Land Use 2025.*

- Facilitate multi-community regional and watershed-wide planning to coordinate policy development and promote cooperative implementation of plans, programs, and projects affecting more than one community.

- Ensure that state-of-the art tools and practices are available to the state's planning professionals, and that planning and management systems are adequately-resourced relative to their mandated missions.

- Strengthen the planning database through continued support for development, maintenance and utilization of a statewide, coordinated geographic information system.

- Develop effective and efficient training programs on an ongoing basis for those involved in local land use planning and decision-making.

2-4 Future Land Use Map

This part of the Plan describes the recommended 2025 future land use pattern for the State of Rhode Island by way of a Future Land Use Map – 2025 (Figure 121-02(1)) that depicts a preferred pattern of land consistent with the vision, goals, and policies of this plan. This map has several purposes and applications: It is intended as a policy guide for directing growth to areas most capable of efficiently supporting current and future developed uses (and conversely, away from areas less suited for development). In this regard, it is intended to inform state and local capital investment decisions so that investments may target and support growth in appropriate areas and discourage growth in inappropriate or inefficient locations. Secondly, the Future Land Use Map is a guide to assist the state and communities in aligning land use policies as local governments make the more specific land use assignments required in local comprehensive plans and supporting land management ordinances. It is important to note the Map is a graphic portrayal of State land use policy. **IT IS NOT A *"STATEWIDE ZONING MAP"*** – zoning matters and individual land use decisions are to remain the prerogative of local governments.

The pattern of land use in Rhode Island in 2025 cannot be known with certainty from the vantage point of 2005, the year when this plan was prepared. However, as described and documented in other parts of this document, it is possible to assess where we are and where we are going, and devise alternative paths which, if pursued, could produce differing outcomes. In this regard, the Future Land Use Plan – 2025 is the culmination of not only the geographic analysis, but also a graphic representation of our vision, goals, and policies.

Or, as the previous (1989) edition of the State Land Use Policies and Plan so elegantly put it, "comparing what we expect and what we would like with what we have, in terms of our land and water resources, is the base from which this state land use plan emerges." ((19))

What Sets This Plan Apart From Earlier Versions?

Earlier versions of the State Land Use Policies and Plan, in 1975 and 1989, arrived at similar recommendations in terms of overall patterns of land use. While not supported by the levels of data and computerized geographic analysis available for this update, they both recommended a compact development pattern for the state that would concentrate development on lands within and adjoining existing urbanized areas where public services were available or were planned. The 1975 plan took a more traditional approach, assigning land to one of twelve specific use categories, including high, medium, and low density residential, three types of commercial, industrial, three categories of open space, and governmental/institutional and airports. In 1989, the approach used was to assign land to four generalized intensity potential categories, and to describe the state's intentions regarding the possible land uses and intensities to which these should be put. This later approach, which recognizes that the purpose of this plan is to provide guidance for the (vast majority of) land use decisions made on a local basis, is followed to a lesser degree in this current version as it relies more on the "urban/.rural" systems approach.

This plan is marked by some other major distinctions from the more recent prior plan, This plan attempts to define land categories that are more intuitive than the somewhat cryptic legend codes used in 1989. More importantly, this plan recognizes that while the policy and guidance of previous efforts were sound, the efficacy of those plans were challenged by the lack of any incentives to implement the policies. The delineation of an urban services boundary and centers together with the recommended state investment policy to direct growth towards those areas are intended to address those shortcomings.

2025 Land Use Categories

The categories proposed to guide the state towards realization of this plan's vision are described in this section. Guidance is provided on the intentions of the plan as to the general intensities of use for various areas, and examples given of the types of land use and landscape features that should be embraced in the future.

The patterns shown on Figure 121-02(1) are broad-scale and should not be interpreted with reference to individual sites or parcels. Site-specific considerations of resource constraints, infrastructure availability and capacity, adjacent usage, and design parameters are determinants of the acceptable land use and intensity for uncommitted land, and these factors can only be evaluated on a local basis using high resolution data. As a result, capacities for individual parcels can range widely within the general categories and broad areas shown on the Future Land Use Map-2025.

As noted above, a major thrust of this edition of the Future State Land Use Plan Map includes a line denoted as the "Urban Services Boundary" together with complimentary "Centers". The intent of showing the urban services boundary on the Future Land Use Map is to denote that significant demarcation in urban pattern – the future boundary of areas that should be more urban in character versus those that should retain a more rural character. In other words, the "urban/rural" systems approach. Lands inside (e.g., toward existing urban/developed areas) the Urban Services Boundary, in general, are anticipated to have a high level of public service available and be the location of more intensive development through 2025. Areas outside the Urban Service Boundary are anticipated to have a lower level of public services available, and are generally (except for potential centers) proposed for lower intensities of development or for reservation as conservation areas and productive rural resource lands.

Two further major categorical demarcations are *Future Use Potential Areas* and *Committed Use Areas* (see the legend on Figure 121-02(1)).

Future Use Potential Areas consider both developed and undeveloped land areas within the urban services boundary. The undeveloped land was found, in the geographic analysis, to be suited for various intensities of development. While the analysis is benchmarked by 1995 land use data, examination of 2003/2004 aerial photography confirms that there remains sufficient undeveloped land within the urban services boundary to accommodate the state's land use needs within the time horizon of this plan. Moreover, this approach is validated by analysis of recent large scale commercial, industrial and residential investment activity within the state that has located almost exclusively within the proposed boundary. Also included are lands indicated as presently committed to a developed use within the urban services boundary. Many of these areas have reuse and infill capacity that is beyond the ability of this plan to quantify but nonetheless adds significantly to the development capacity within the boundary.

The area within the urban services boundary, along with potential centers outside the urban services boundary, are identified as the optimum areas for accommodating the bulk of the state's development needs through 2025. They are areas where growth, be it new development or reuse, infill, and re-development of existing committed urban land at more intensive levels, should generally be encouraged by state and local policies and investment programs. They are areas where the most change is anticipated in the future. Future Use Potential Areas also include lands that were shown through the geographic analysis as being more suited for conservation uses, and lands outside the urban service area boundary that are not needed to

accommodate the state's growth needs. In these categories, it is recommended that growth and development not be encouraged or supported.

Committed Use Areas include currently developed land outside the urban service area as well as currently protected parkland, open space areas, waterbodies, and wetlands. Active prime farmland is also identified as a committed use area. The intention is that these areas should generally remain in these productive uses.

More detailed descriptions of the future land use categories and their intended uses are provided in Table 121-02(1) on the pages following.

Table 121-02(1)
FUTURE LAND USE 2025 CATEGORIES AND INTENDED USES

1. FUTURE USE POTENTIAL AREAS

A. Growth – Areas recommended to accommodate the state's anticipated growth needs through 2025 include:

Maintenance / Infill / Reuse / Development

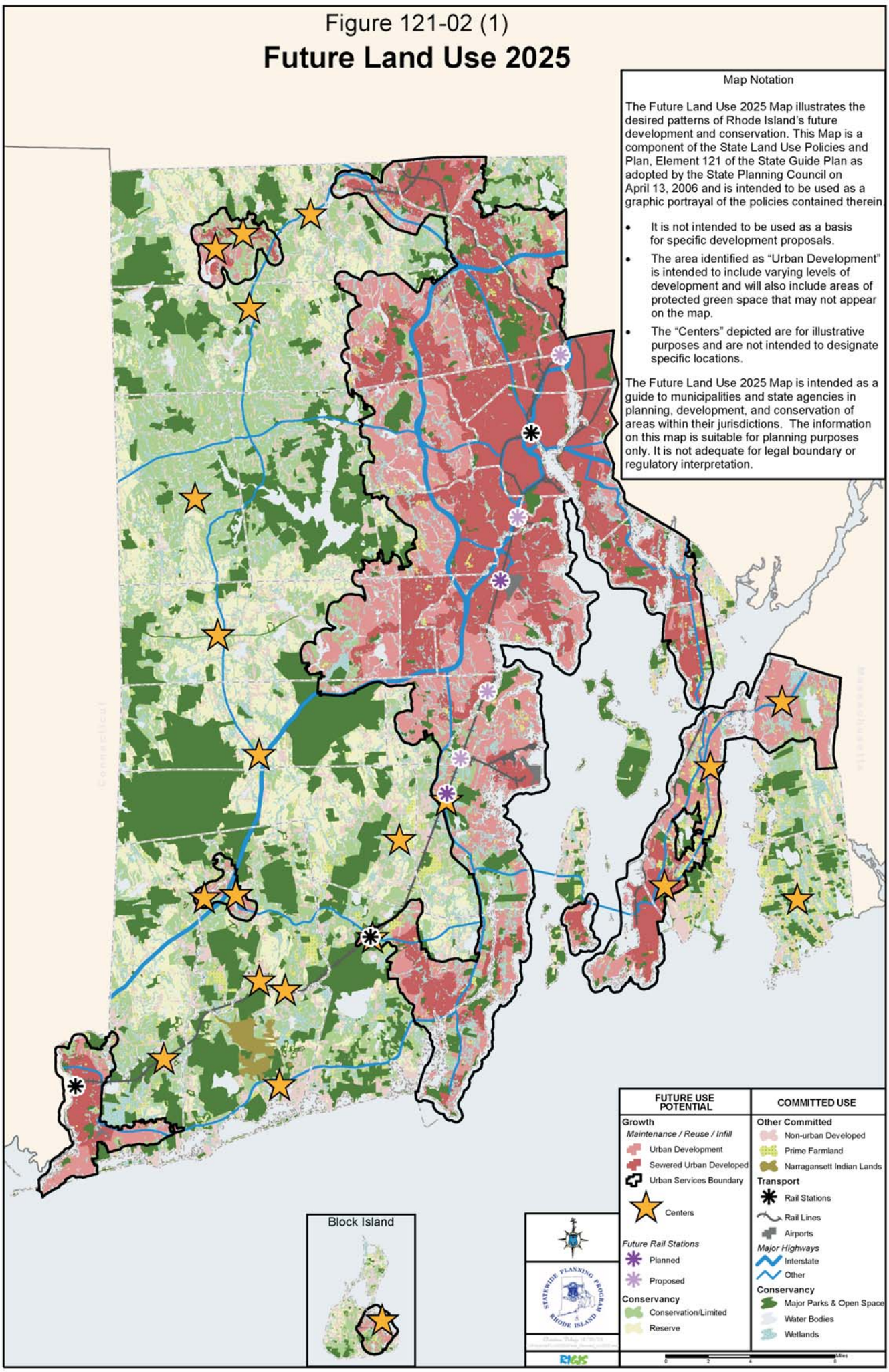
This category includes land identified as both developed and undeveloped land within the urban services boundary. The developed areas generally have, or are likely to be provided with, most urban-level services (especially public water and/or sewer) through 2025. Typical uses include residential of varying types and generally of medium (1-2 du./ac.) to high (5+ du./ac.) densities (with many areas at substantially higher densities exceeding 20 units per acre, see Table 121-03(2) for examples), along with substantial commercial, industrial, mixed, and institutional uses, and supporting infrastructure (transport, utilities, parks, and recreation areas). A number of existing regional employment and service centers and civic uses are included in this category. The developed lands also include underutilized lands (abandoned/derelict commercial/industrial sites and vacant land). Priorities for urban-developed lands are maintenance and enhancement of productive uses and re-use of underutilized areas to accommodate growth at intensities that efficiently utilize available services.

This category's uncommitted land within the urban services boundary is generally capable of accommodating various intensities of urban-type development. Some undeveloped areas have few resource constraints and have, or are likely to be provided with, urban-level services including public water, and transit and, in some locations sewer service, through 2025. In these high capability/serviced areas, the priority is urban type development with intensities and residential densities that mirror urban developed lands and enable efficient provision and utilization of public services including transit.

This category also encompasses uncommitted land within the urban service area that is generally capable of accommodating a medium level

Figure 121-02 (1)

Future Land Use 2025



of urban development. These areas may have some few resource constraints, but have, or are likely to be provided with, some urban-level services, especially public water service, through 2025. They would generally include residential uses at average densities of one to four five dwelling units per acre (with some areas of higher density), including single family dwellings (attached and detached), garden apartments and similar multi-family complexes. They may include areas of mixed residential, commercial, and low-impact industrial uses, as well as office/industrial areas and supporting institutional uses and infrastructure. undeveloped land that may have only public water service available or planned. Areas with just public water service and few development constraints are capable of moderate intensity development with residential densities of between 1 and 5 dwelling units per acre.

Also included in this category, are other undeveloped areas within the urban services boundary, which will have lesser development intensity due to the presence of site and/or resource constraints, or limited services. Where such constraints exist, they will limit intensity of usage. Residential uses in such areas will tend to be at the lower end of the density range -- an average density of under one dwelling unit per acre, and significant areas would be expected to be reserved as open land (farmland, forests, wetlands). Conservation/open space-style development and similar techniques should be relied upon to limit development intensities and impacts and to conserve land within portions of the urban services area having development constraints and/or limited services. Small commercial or mixed-use areas to service local needs, and isolated, low-impact industrial uses and supporting infrastructure would also be encompassed.

As depicted on the map, limited areas within the urban services boundary have public sewer service available. These fully-serviced areas should be regarded as a scarce resource, that absent significant constraints, should be developed [or redeveloped] at higher intensities and densities so as to optimize the significant public infrastructure investment.

Note: Included in the generalized development category within the urban service boundary are areas having locally-significant resource values or locally-important sites, such as greenway corridors, groundwater aquifers, or scenic viewsheds. Such areas are appropriate for conservation via public or private land protection efforts.

B. Conservancy – Areas recommended to be retained substantially undeveloped, open land through 2025 are:

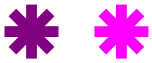
Conservation/Limited – Uncommitted lands that possess significant resource values requiring protection. These areas are best suited for resource protection, sustainable resource production, and associated low intensity / low-impact uses compatible with protection of resource values. Transfer of development rights, conservation-design subdivisions, and similar land management techniques should be relied upon to limit intensities of use, emphasize compact development, minimize resource impacts, and to conserve open land within these areas. Residential densities should average no more than 0.25 dwelling units per acre, with substantial areas of protected land and/or working lands (agriculture/silviculture) included. Development within these areas must adhere to stringent standards for water management and best impact avoidance practices.

Reserve – Includes uncommitted open lands that are not required to accommodate the state's development needs through 2025. While these areas are generally capable of supporting varying types and intensities of development, public development assistance must be carefully balanced with the objectives of retaining the state's rural working landscapes (agriculture/silviculture), protecting resource values, and providing a reserve of land for future use (beyond 2025). Transfer of development rights, conservation-design subdivisions, and similar Land land management techniques should be relied upon to limit intensities of use, emphasize compact development, minimize resource impacts, and to conserve open land within these areas.

C. Other

Centers – Includes potential new compact developed areas having a defined central core providing many of the functions needed by the residents of the town and its economic region. Uses include residential – at higher densities – that provide optimum utilization of land and services and offer diverse housing stock, commercial, industrial, office, cultural, and governmental uses. Density will vary greatly between centers, however, they will share the common characteristic of compact development (see Table 121-03(3)) for some local examples). Centers characteristically are developed with a human scale of blocks, streets, and open spaces, offering easy walking and access to transit where available. In suburban areas, centers should be distinguished from surrounding development by a more cohesive development form and closer proximity between residential and non-residential uses. In rural areas, centers should be surrounded by natural areas, farmland, or open space and may have a commercial area in the core for neighborhood-scale goods and services.

Note: Centers depicted on the Future Land Use Map are illustrative of potential new centers that may be established. Existing centers are generally not shown, and other new centers may be proposed through local initiative.



Rail Station – New passenger rail stations anticipated through 2025. (Planned stations are shown as well as those only conceptually proposed – not all may be realized.) New rail stations should provide an impetus for new centers or other transit-oriented development.

Urban Services Boundary – General bound of the areas within which public services supporting urban development presently exist, or are likely to be provided, through 2025. Within the urban services area most land should be served by public water service and many areas will have public sewer service available as well. Public transit service should be generally available, with high-density corridors providing frequent headways. The intent of the Urban Services Area Boundary is to provide an indication for planning purposes of areas where a higher level of public services is anticipated to be available to accommodate more intensive development. Public services in areas outside the Urban Services Boundary are anticipated to be more limited, and planned development intensities should accordingly be lower. Several watersheds and other sensitive resource areas which presently have public water service have been excluded from the Urban Services Boundary, indicating that protection of the resources involved must be a principle concern limiting future development intensity potential.

2. COMMITTED USE AREAS

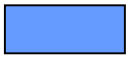
The future map also shows areas that are presently committed to a particular land use, or intensity level. In most cases, these uses are recommended to continue in their present status.

A. Conservancy – Existing protected areas to be conserved:

Major Parks & Open Space – Includes lands held by federal, state, and local governments, and private non-profit conservation organizations for public recreation or conservation uses.

Note: not all protected lands are shown due to scale and data limitations.

Active Prime Farmland – Areas currently in active agricultural usage that are situated on soils identified as Prime Farmland Soils by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Active prime farmland should be maintained in active agricultural production or as a strategic food supply reserve for the future.



Water Bodies – Coastal and inland open water areas -- to be protected and conserved.

Wetlands – Areas identified as fresh and salt water wetlands, exclusive of open water wetland types. Wetland areas are to be protected and conserved.

B. Transport – Major existing transportation infrastructure to be maintained and enhanced for continuing optimum utilization potential:

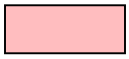
Airport – State airport

Rail Station – Existing rail passenger station

Rail Line – Active rail lines

Major Highway – National Highway System highways

C. Developed - Committed: Existing land uses presumed to be continued



Non-urban Developed – Includes lands identified as developed which are outside of the urban services boundary. These areas generally lack public water or sewer service, and are not anticipated to have such services through 2025. Uses include residential, generally at medium to low (<1 du./ac.) densities, as well as some areas of commercial, industrial, and mixed use, and associated supporting land uses (institutional, utilities, park facilities, etc.) Maintenance of these uses in productive use via enhancement and limited expansion is anticipated.

D. Other:

Narragansett Indian Tribal Lands – Includes lands subject to the 1979 Land Claim Settlement Agreement between the Narragansett Indian Tribe and the State of Rhode Island. This category is shown for illustrative purposes and a future use potential is not described for these lands by this Land Use Plan. However, pursuant to the Settlement Agreement and subsequent state legislation, use of these lands is to be subject to a Land Use Plan for the Land Claim Settlement Area accepted by the Tribe and the Town of Charlestown, and no less than 75% of the lands subject to the Agreement are to be retained in conservation uses.